

From: [Philip F. Mangano](#)
To: [Kent Smith](#)
Subject: News from the American Round Table to Abolish Homelessness
Date: Friday, July 24, 2015 7:34:12 AM



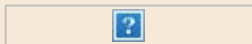
INNOVATION . . . INFORMATION . . . INSPIRATION

July 24, 2015

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES NEW STRATEGY TO END VETERANS HOMELESSNESS IN NATION'S 12th MOST POPULOUS COUNTY; VA COMMITS ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The San Bernardino County, California Board of Supervisors, meeting this week in a Special Session on homelessness, voted unanimously to implement a new strategy to end veterans' homelessness in the county.



"If we're able to cross the finish line with this, there's so much more we can accomplish in other areas," noted Board Chairman James Ramos, shown at left. Ramos, meeting with Vice Chairman Robert Lovingood, Supervisor Josie Gonzales, and

Supervisor Janice Rutherford, committed to the new plan to place the county's 401 veterans in permanent housing. The Special Session was convened to review current efforts and future strategies to reduce homelessness. The Supervisors are shown above.



Supervisor Josie Gonzales, who has



championed homelessness as an issue, pointed to the unprecedented level of collaboration she now sees in the County on the issue of homelessness. Supervisor Gonzales is shown here.

The Special Session began with County CEO Greg Devereaux (shown at right) noting that homelessness is a pressing issue in the county. He reviewed a county organization chart showing the impact of homelessness on county agencies and services.



The Board of Supervisors invited Round Table President Philip Mangano to address the session to help shape the new response which will create a new strategy group composed of nine local agencies or county offices including the County CEO, Sheriff's Department, and Department of Behavioral

Health and Housing Authority. Work will be done to identify participation from the WIB, the faith community, and the business and civic leadership in the County. Mangano is shown here addressing the Board. The new group will work with the ongoing frontline provider group in the county.



Special Assistant to the VA Secretary Vincent Kane, speaking on Skype to the Board, commended the San Bernardino County partners on their progress so far in ending veterans homelessness. Based on the County's efforts and goals, Kane announced that the VA had identified resources for 30 additional bridge beds to engage veterans awaiting housing in the community. VA is working with HUD to

identify additional HUD-VASH vouchers to finish the job.

Kane noted that there is no precedent for these local results in California and that the County should understand its progress as "blazing the trail" for other communities serving those in both urban and rural areas and providing lessons that the country can learn from. Kane is shown above.

Kane stressed the importance of moving from managing homelessness to ending homelessness, using the key strategy of Housing First. He urged the partners to identify who needs housing, how to sustain it, and the tools to achieve community integration.

Tom Hernandez, Department of Behavioral Health's Office of Homeless Services, reviewed the current structure, financing, and governance of the county's homeless [initiatives](#). Hernandez reviewed the county's recent decreases in homelessness, noting that there was an 18% decrease in homelessness between 2011-2013 and an additional 8% decrease from 2013-2015, during the period when the County has implemented a Housing First strategy. Hernandez reviewed the roles of the San Bernardino County Homelessness Partnership, Interagency Council on Homelessness, Homeless Provider Network, and the County Office of Homeless Services. Hernandez is pictured here.



Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino Executive Director Dan Nackerman (shown here) summarized Housing Authority [programs](#), noting the natural expansion of the role of housing authorities in the implementation of Housing First. Observing that HACSB has embraced federal direction in ending

homelessness, Nackerman pointed to the increasing role HACSB has played over the last 6-8 years in leading regional efforts and working to house people who are homeless at a greater rate. HACSB has a homeless preference at work in all its programs. The KEYS [Knowledge and Education for Your Success] program, a non-profit created by HACSB and HACSB's work with the Sheriff's Department HOPE program are examples of the partnerships creating housing results. HACSB is also developing an initiative to address the housing needs of discharged patients.

In his remarks to the Supervisors, Mangano noted the important role that San Bernardino County plays in the national effort to end homelessness. The County's efforts and results in the fifth-most populous county in California, and the 12th most populous in the United States offer great potential for replication in other



communities. "There are far more places like San Bernardino County in our country than there are places like New York City," indicated Mangano. He congratulated the Supervisors on their individual interest in the issue of homelessness, pointing out that he had met with each during prior visits.

The new Strategy Group will work in conjunction with the Homeless Veterans Community Planning Group, which formed in November at the VA Medical Center in Loma Linda. The group will assess the scope of the



homeless veteran problem in the county, establish benchmarks to accomplish its mission, and identify the resources needed to accomplish the mission. Laurie Martell of the Loma Linda VA Medical Center, told the Supervisors details of the current effort to house the County's 401 veterans. She noted that 91 veterans have been housed this year, and 115 veterans are working with the VA to move to housing. Ms. Martell and Mr. Mangano are shown here.

Watch a video of the Special Session [here](#).

Read the San Bernardino Sun coverage of the Special Session [here](#) and [here](#).



The Tidings, the weekly newspaper of the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, this week published an article by staff writer Robert

Dellinger, **New L.A. laws punish, criminalize the homeless**. Noting the high number of people homeless in Los Angeles, Dellinger examined the two recently passed Los Angeles City Council [ordinances](#) that will expand police action to "confiscate the personal belongings of homeless individuals in sidewalks and in parks, to tear down homeless encampments and to issue misdemeanor criminal citations."

Following is The Tidings article, which is also available [online](#).

New L.A. laws punish, criminalize the homeless

'The punitive police approach never gets the job done'
July 17, 2015 - R.W. Dellinger

Los Angeles has the largest number of homeless people in the nation - nearly 26,000 in the city, more than 44,000 in the county. For years it's had the troubling distinction of being America's "homeless capital."

With two new restrictive Los Angeles City ordinances, the City of the Angels might soon become known as the nation's number one enemy of the homeless.

The laws, which will take effect July 18, make it easier for the city to confiscate the personal belongings of homeless individuals left on sidewalks and in parks, to tear down homeless encampments and to issue misdemeanor criminal citations.

After 24 hours, instead of what used to be three days, the police are now authorized to seize homeless people's belongings, and either

give them a ticket or charge them with a crime, even if they're present to claim the items. Smaller possessions will be impounded for 90 days at a city facility on Skid Row. Bulky things that don't fit in 60-gallon trash bins, like mattresses and larger tents, as well as hazardous items can be confiscated without any warning.

Before 2012, authorities had a fairly free hand with the homeless in L.A. But then a federal appeals court stopped the police from taking and destroying their possessions. Also under court order, homeless people have been allowed to sleep in the street from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. But then their tents and tarps must come down and be stored somewhere.

The not-so-subtle reason for the new laws, according to most homeless advocates as well as many city watchers, is to restore the ability of city authorities to clean up Skid Row and homeless encampments at other locales in a litigation-proof manner.

'It's everywhere now'

So why is all this happening right now?

Back in mid-May, LASHA (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, a joint city-county agency) released its required biennial street census of the homeless. An op-ed piece in The Los Angeles Times called the findings "unambiguously depressing."

For both the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County, the homeless population jumped 12 percent between 2013 and now. Even more startling, the number of homeless encampments and vehicles occupied by homeless people skyrocketed 85 percent to 9,535. The report meticulously documented with a digitalized map the locations of these camps spread throughout the county.

"It's everywhere now," said L.A. City Councilman Mike Bonin, who represents Venice, where homelessness has been an issue for years.

And while there was a 6 percent decline in the county of homeless veterans to 4,343, the figure rose 6 percent in the city with 2,733.

What's mind-boggling is the double-digit percent increase of homeless people in Los Angeles, together with the explosion of homeless encampments, while the city has been spending more than \$100 million annually trying to manage homelessness. That amount comes from a scathing report commissioned by the City Council's housing committee.

How can that possibly be?

Maybe it's the fact that 87 percent of the \$100 million is earmarked for the police patrolling Skid Row and making arrests, with only about \$13 million actually going towards mental health intervention and housing efforts.

"It's an embarrassment what's going on in Los Angeles," said Philip F. Mangano, president and CEO of the American Round Table to Abolish Homelessness. "Instead of investing in solutions, they're

spending money on what will not bring a solution, which will only demoralize the police, demoralize public policy makers because you're just going to see the same problem over and over and over again. It's the recycling of the problem instead of solving it."

Mangano should know. In 2002, he was appointed by President George W. Bush to head up the federal government's anti-homeless effort. His mission was to travel the country changing the mindset on homelessness from simply serving homeless people to ending their homelessness as well as learning more about successful programs.

"The punitive police approach never gets the job done - ever - reducing homelessness," he reported. "There's no correlation between the punitive approach and the reduction of homelessness. The only thing that solves homelessness, and it sounds like a totality, is the simplest thing you ever heard: providing housing. That's what mayors, city councils, county executives who are successful in reducing homelessness are doing.

Putting housing first

The Housing First approach, which began in the late '80s, emphasizes stable permanent housing as the primary strategy for ending homelessness, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Its focus is getting both chronic and newly homeless people into rental apartments as quickly as possible. On an as-needed basis, support services are then offered to keep that person or family housed.

Los Angeles has some small private Housing First efforts, including Skid Row Housing, GETTLOVE and Step Up On Vine. Mangano applauds those programs. But he says city officials are still headed in the opposite direction by increasingly taking even harsher punitive measures against the homeless.

So why doesn't Mayor Eric Garcetti and the City Council - whose members all voted for the ordinances except Councilman Gil Cedillo - get that?

"I think they're functioning in old-school thinking," Mangano pointed out. "It's hard for people to understand that even on the issue of homeless efforts have been updated. Even in homelessness, there are innovative ideas that replace the old breadline and church-based shelter ideas.

"And the key antidote is a place to live."

He likened it to typing on a Smith Corona or looking for a pay phone today. He reports that some of the most innovative housing ideas have been offered to the most vulnerable homeless, such as addicted or mentally ill persons who have been on the street for years.

"And the bonus in housing the homeless is that there are sufficient cost benefits. It's been demonstrated conclusively that housing that vulnerable person is less expensive to the public purse," said Mangano.

"So it's cost effective and consumer preferred. Because homeless people want a place to live despite all of the stereotyping and the myth. If you ask homeless people what they want, they never say a pill, a program or a protocol. They always want a place to live."

Creating a new crime

Retired UCLA law professor Gary Blasi, who currently is special counsel at Public Counsel Opportunity Under Law, has been studying and advocating for L.A.'s homeless since 1983. Earlier this month, he co-authored an op-ed piece with Mangano for the Los Angeles Times headlined, "Stop punishing and start helping L.A.'s homeless."

"Not only will [the new laws] make it easier to cite or arrest homeless people, they will create an entirely new crime: the crime of having more possessions than you can carry on your back," he said in an email interview. "A person who has been cited for having possessions on public property cannot legally move those possessions to any other place in the entire 486 square miles of the City of Los Angeles."

"That is because all property is either private or public. Putting possessions on private property without permission constitutes trespassing. Public property is the only other choice. A homeless person can escape prosecution by carrying her things to another city. But she will face similar, but not quite as harsh, laws in those cities."

Blasi points out that the new laws, which will take effect July 18, can only be described as an attempt by City of Los Angeles leaders, with the exception of Councilman Cedillo, to banish homeless people from the city. This is despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of homeless people on the streets of Los Angeles are long-time Angelenos.

"Through my research as a UCLA law professor (now emeritus), I am familiar with anti-homeless laws in cities across America," he reported. "I am aware of none as callous and cruel as these laws."

Later in the interview, he points out that local religious leaders haven't taken note of, never mind protested against, the anti-homeless statutes.

"Other than through some charity, the faith community has never been more silent," wrote Blasi. "I don't think that silence reflects a change in values as much as a lack of accurate information. I hope the silence ends."

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American Round Table | Five Park Street | Boston | MA | 02108